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# VERSES

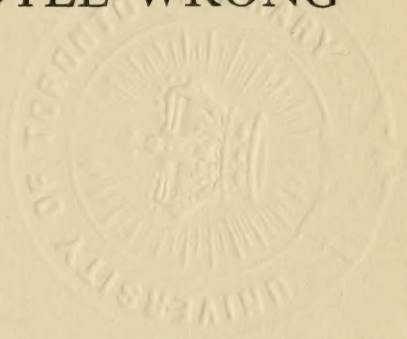




# V E R S E S

BY

HAROLD VERSCHOYLE WRONG



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**H**AROLD VERSCHOYLE WRONG was born at Toronto, on December 1, 1891. He was educated at St Andrew's College, Toronto, and at Ridley College, St Catharines, from which school, in 1909, he entered University College, Toronto, with a classical scholarship. He had an inherited relationship with the University of Toronto, for in it his father is a Professor, and of it both his grandfather and his great-grandfather had been Chancellors. At the University he spent four years reading classics; as an undergraduate he was a member of the Kappa Alpha Society and played lawn tennis for the University; on graduating, in 1913, he won the McCaul Medal in Classics, and the Flavell Travelling Fellowship. In the autumn of the same year he entered Christ Church, Oxford, and read for the school of Literae Humaniores.

When the war began he was spending the long vacation of 1914 in Canada, and he returned to Oxford for the Michaelmas Term, which he mainly devoted to work with the Officers' Training Corps. In December, 1914, he was gazetted to the 15th (Service) Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers; he joined his unit at Manchester, and after ten months' training, chiefly in the north of England, went to France with it in November, 1915.

His battalion was part of the 32nd Division, which held a sector in the southern part of the British line near Albert. At 7.30 in the morning of July 1, 1916, it took part in the great attack which began the Battle of the Somme. The last word heard of him came from a private hit early in the advance, that Lieutenant Wrong was wounded in the hand, but still leading on his men. In an

unknown grave on the slopes of Thiepval his body lies near hundreds of his comrades; the battalion was practically wiped out in the attack, and when some months later Thiepval was taken by the British his body was not among those identified.

About half the verses included in this collection have not been printed before; of the remainder, two ('The Joyous Venture' and 'Death') were included in *Volume V of Wara's English Poets*, and the others in *Arbor*, a magazine published at the University of Toronto between 1910 and 1913, in the production of which he took a leading part. The hitherto unpublished verses were found on loose sheets scattered among his papers; some slight alterations and omissions have been made, and in a few cases titles have been added. Most of these verses were written before the summer of 1913;—that is, when the writer was not yet twenty-two.

It was felt that those who had known him might like to have some small memorial of him, and for this reason a few copies of this collection have been printed for circulation among his friends.



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**Y**OU who have counted your lives by the length of  
your years,  
You who have measured your woes by the well of your  
tears,  
You who have numbered your joys with a sparing hand,  
Read not, for you cannot understand.

## THE JOYOUS VENTURE

THE travel-birds that journey in the spring  
Lust after pleasures of awakened sight;  
They rout the weather in a truceless fight,  
And swell their souls with joy of buffeting  
And constant strife. To know the unknown thing,  
To see the unseeable in God's despite,  
To try his strength against another's might,—  
This set Ulysses to his wandering.

And this we still desire, we who live  
Clamped to the dulness of an ordered round;  
'Tis ours to take the best the world can give,  
And if the taking slay us on the way  
What loss is that? We too were outward bound  
Beyond the narrow shelter of the bay.



## ROUNDELS

### I

#### SHE IS NOT FAIR

**S**HE is not fair, for it were vanity  
To call a goddess beautiful, and dare  
To taunt with fairness her sublimity.

She is not fair.

Whomocks with speech of grandeur the broad glare  
Of the imperial sun? Who calls the sea  
A lovely thing, or reckons up its share  
Of glory that his doubting mind may see  
What it is worth, whether to praise or spare  
His praise? So splendid then is she;  
She is not fair.

## II

### MERETRIX MORIENS AD AMATOREM

**D**I G me a grave where none shall discover,  
Where no one can spurn me, nor parson nor knave;  
Do you find the place, as is meet for a lover,  
And dig me a grave.

If I seemed good to you, served as your slave  
And worshipped you blindly, nor sought to uncover  
The faults that the world saw, if I showed myself brave  
When all turned to scorn me, now pay me twice over  
With one great return for the little I gave;  
Down in the quiet and hid in the clover  
Dig me a grave.

## SONG

O H! I could weave the beauty of the ocean,  
Weave it in a web,  
The beauty of the ocean  
And the tide's slow ebb.

And I could paint the glory of the mountains,  
Paint it in brilliant hue,  
The glory of the mountains,  
All their green and blue.

But who can tell the magic of your eyes,  
Weave it or paint or sing,  
The magic of your eyes  
That knows no prisoning?



## THE CHORD OF YOUTH

‘**S**TRIKE me the chord of the old and grey,’  
I said to the fiddler blind.  
He raised his bow and began to play,  
But the chord he struck was young and gay;  
‘Not that,’ I cried, ‘you have gone astray.’  
I called for another note.

He turned to me with his eye-balls dead,  
Nor changed the tune he played,  
But to the sound of it swayed his head  
As its dancing music rioted,  
And ‘Youth it ill befits,’ he said,  
‘To hark to the songs of age.’

## FAIR WINDS

MAY the wind blow fair from the south, the south,  
To rouse up the clouds in the west,  
But never send me the cold east wind  
That wears a storm in his breast.

For I have no love for womankind  
And little for any man;  
My love is all with the yellow sun  
Whose fire the south winds fan.

I have no love for the majesty  
Of the sweep of the coming storm;  
My love is all with the blue of the sky  
And clear days, long and warm.

Then bid me not take a maid to wife,  
Nor tell me of love hard won;  
For the love of my soul is unrivall'd,  
And that love, it is called the sun.

## TO HER ABSENT LOVE

**N**O, not to-morrow, for what is to-morrow to me  
But Eternity

With all of to-night ere to-morrow's light can be?

Come then to-day! You can speak to-day as well,

And tell

What you would.—Ah, I could! How my heart would swell

Bursting my breast! A kiss for the rest, and 'twere done;

Then the sun

Might sink. Who could think Night had won?

## MORITURA TE SALUTO

YES, sit you there where I can see your face;  
To-night we are but lovers, but who knows  
What we may be to-morrow when we're wed?  
Perchance you'll turn a tyrant, I, a wife,  
A creature made to fill your nature out  
And please you at your leisure, cast aside  
When you are weary, taken as a toy  
To soothe you when you're sad and make you gay.  
There was a time when things were different,  
And I was tyrant and could laugh at those  
Who came to woo; but then my heart was whole,  
And I'd not given half of it away  
For the mere asking; then I stood alone  
And in myself sufficient, like a god.  
I did not long to search another out  
On whom to empty out my inmost thoughts  
As you men do.—But now all that is past,  
And I am treading on an unknown road,  
Whither I know not, but it leads away,  
Far, far away from that I trod before.  
Here am I, blinded by the gleam of love  
That late I mocked at, thought an untrimmed lamp  
Which none but fools would look on. Like a moth  
I've singed my wings and now must give my life,  
Whether I would or not, to serve its ends.  
Ah, how I've stood aside and laughed at those  
Who turned their feeble lamp-light to their sun,  
And closed their eyes to swear that nought more bright



Shone ever upon earth—the while I knew  
 That when its oil was burned it must go out  
 And with its death slay all its worshippers.  
 Now here is my own lamp that mocks the day  
 And jeers at all the candles of the sky,  
 It seems so bright.—I vowed that I would live  
 To use the love of others, be a stone  
 For aught I felt, yet use to mine own ends  
 The blindness of those fools who dared to think  
 That stones could love. I had ambition then  
 Not of the vainer sort, my thoughts were high;  
 And now they are but dreams unrealized,  
 And my whole life is what I've left behind.  
 Oh, what a fool I was who needs must love  
 When all my stars bade me have scorn of it!  
 Well, the lot's fallen and my lamp is lit,  
 Its oil, my life; and when that's all burned out  
 There's death the second time, for I must die  
 To-morrow once, slain by the priestly vows  
 That make us one. *That* is my suicide.  
 They say the end of life is but a change,  
 For the better, too, perchance this is the same.  
 God knows and I shall soon.—This is not love,  
 You tell me, but I say you cannot tell,  
 For you can love and live, but if I love  
 (As truly I must do or 'tis but vain  
 To wed at all) I slay my former self,  
 And all that's left of me is but to deck  
 Your nature out, to cover up your faults,

To keep all petty troubles from your ear,  
To be a housewife, and to leave to you  
The working out of God's appointed tasks.  
Mine are the little struggles, yours the great,  
And even the smallest have their own rewards,  
With which I must content me.—Love has torn  
The very ground away on which I stood,  
And what was once my life has fallen down.  
Soon I must build it up again with you  
The corner-stone, but now I cannot see  
To judge aright for that same little lamp  
Of which I spoke has dazzled my dull eyes  
And clothed the world in a soft, golden, haze.  
I go the way before me; if I sin  
I pray that God sees fit to pardon me.

There, love, I've sung the dirge of my old self;  
To-morrow is my second natal-day,  
And then for all to-morrows I am yours.

## TRIOLETS

### I

WHEN you know me as your lover  
Will you cease to call me friend?  
When my secret you discover  
And you know me as your lover,  
Must companionship be over,  
Must acquaintance have an end?  
When you know me as your lover  
Will you cease to call me friend?

## II

## TRAGEDY

**I** H A D three aces,  
But he held a straight;  
'Twas very ungracious  
When I had three aces,  
To be so audacious  
As to win, high with eight.  
I had three aces  
But he held a straight.



## WINTER

UNBEAUTIFUL ! Because I do not wear  
A great debauch of colour, am I not fair?

Look at the whirling snowflakes as they sink  
Spotting the world with myriad dainty shapes  
So silently. Unbeautiful, you think!

Look at my towering icy mysteries,—  
Can Summer show you beauties such as these?

Did brighter glory ever tinge the sky?

Did days more brilliant ever journey by  
Through flowery fields and deep green woodland vales,  
Than when the land is clothed with virgin snow?

Could music sweeter sob through Summer gales  
Than I can play when all the world is bare  
And wind's soft wailing whispers everywhere?

I bid the land to rest until the day  
When I am gone. My sweeping breezes play  
Upon the trees, and lull them into sleep

That wakes not till the rousing sun of Spring

Ends their repose and makes new living creep  
Up through their frames, bids stuporous slumber go,  
Turns my hard radiance to a softer glow.

I am the Winter. Where I choose to go  
Hidden in mists of softly falling snow,

There go I, unforbid by man or god.

I journey far and visit many lands,

I see great peoples and vast plains untrod  
By living thing. My ways are hard and rough,  
But I am Winter—Is not that enough?

## THE PATHWAY OF THE MOON

DOWN the pathway of the moon  
Stretching far and far away,  
Further than the mind can see,  
There, on light-flakes, tiny shoon  
Tread with quickly moving beat  
Of the fairies' dancing feet,  
Till they sound a merry tune,  
And the tinkling light-flakes cry  
With soft notes their lullaby  
All together,  
In fair weather  
Down the pathway of the moon  
Ever sounds that cheerful tune.

So they journey to the ending,  
How far there is none can say,  
For the pathway stretches further,  
Further than the earth's slow bending.  
Never tired on they wander  
Where the light is gleaming yonder,  
Thither 'tis that they are wending.

Then what is it they discover?  
Perhaps some rainbow pot of gold  
Hidden where we searching mortals  
All unwitting pass it over.  
Is it fairyland they find,  
All things other left behind,  
Or the lost land of the lover?

THE PATHWAY OF THE MOON

Yet, so says a whispering sage,  
One who sought himself to follow  
Down the pathway of the moon,  
On they travel age on age,  
Dancing forward, gaily singing,  
All from lust of journeying,  
Nor seek to end the pleasant stage.

Perchance they find the ocean's ending  
Where the twinkling waters cease  
Underneath the yellow moon,  
Out beyond the world's slow bending.  
I only seek to travel on  
Down the path where they have gone,  
Careless of my journey's ending,  
While I hear the tinkling cry  
Of the light-flakes' lullaby,  
And together,  
In fair weather,  
The fairies dance with tiny shoon  
Down the pathway of the moon.

GRANT me no feeble entry. I can fight,  
And since all life is fighting, give it me  
To love and win your love tumultuously  
By strength to conquer. That only is the rite  
That makes all loving sacred; thus the night  
Stubbornly woos the day, the tidal sea  
Subdues and weds the land in victory,  
And clasps the headland with insurgent might.

So would I win you; or if I must fail,  
Even defeat can profit.—Then I know  
How good the fight, and I may yet prevail.  
I feel the joy of struggle; you and I  
Can read our strength, and unashamed can go  
To meet the awful glory of the sky.



## PER AEQUORA VECTUS

**M**Y LOVE and I went o'er the sea,  
Sunlit and gold our way,  
The slow tides crooned their minstrelsy  
Like leaves upon an autumn tree  
Before the winter shakes them free,  
And all of life was play.

We saw the glory of the sky;  
The ocean's emptiness  
With its divine immensity  
Had no awe for us; eye to eye  
We looked and scorned sublimity,  
Firm in our happiness.

Then my love left me, and I came  
Alone across the sea;  
Again I saw the sunset flame,  
And all the visions without name  
Shone on me beautiful, the same,  
In gorgeous majesty.

And then I knew the rippling tide  
I could not know before;  
It took me to its breast to ride  
Across its kingdom, stretching wide,  
Banked in by heaven on either side,  
It bore me forward glorified  
On to the further shore.

# SHAKESPEAREAN LOVE SONNETS

## I

**L**ET grand-dames prate of love as once it was  
In the dim ages of the yesterday;  
If chivalry is gone, then let it pass;  
Shall we twain stand though all the world decay?  
Perchance full-soon in grey-haired peace we'll sit  
And mumble out that all true love is dead,  
The while our children woo, nor care a whit  
For all our speech of times long vanishèd.  
O, it may be that love is doomed to die,  
For we have drained his life-blood drop by drop,  
Ta'en his whole being for our property  
Nor given him aught with which his wound to stop.  
We've drunk his sweets so deep that none remain,  
And by excess of loving love is slain.

## II

Like the clear sound of a loud-chiming bell  
That hails the early rising of the sun,  
And with its clamour breaks the midnight spell,  
And bids the darkness and the gloom be gone;  
Thus sang my heart when first I saw thy face,  
And all thy beauty glowed before my eyes,  
Which blinded were by surplusage of grace,  
Nor dared to watch the glory of thy rise.  
But on thy coming still a dull presage  
Numbed half my joy and roused an empty grief;  
I said, 'This beauty and this youth must age,  
It needs must wither like a withered leaf.'  
But then, my love, I knew not half thy worth,  
Nor saw thy dying would transcend thy birth.

## ENGLAND—1914

ENGLAND, you are mighty; England you are free;  
Yours a thousand noble deeds, yours a noble name,  
You the mighty sailor, the landlord of the sea,  
Look, but do not vaunt of it, you too inherit shame,  
You that wrought so proudly, you too inherit shame.

People in their thousands most gladly give you praise;  
You have laid the corner-stone, you it was who built,  
Yours the great foundation that endureth many days,  
Look and wonder at it, the stately house you built,  
Look and yet remember, you too inherit guilt.

We count them by their millions, the soldiers that will fight,  
And each will swear his cause is just before he goes to die;  
Then are all causes mockery, or are all causes right?  
If there be falsehood anywhere, see that you do not lie;  
The gods will judge the truth of it, and England must  
not lie.

## THE DEAD—1914

T H E R E they lie,  
Twenty deep,  
Torn and shattered  
Into sleep;  
They were fighters,  
Let them be,  
They have died  
For Liberty.

Who shall name it?  
Did they fight  
Against evil  
For the right?  
Every nation  
Answers yes;  
Who shall prove  
Their righteousness?

Be the conquest  
As it may,  
We have lost them  
In a day,  
A thousand thousand  
Good and bad;  
They have given  
All they had.



THE DEAD—1914

Honour to them  
For the fight;  
Who are they  
To judge the right?  
But God grant it—  
Set us free  
From this Hell  
Of Liberty.

## DEATH

**I** F E L T the clouds and all around me mist,  
Behind, the twilight, a great flame before  
That pierced the thick-spun texture of the clouds;  
Behind it cleared, the mist was all in front.  
I stood upon a pinnacle that rose  
High in the air, and yet there was no height,  
But all the world lay near within my grasp.  
Light was my soul and my feet urged me on,  
On through the grey that cloaked the distant flame;  
I paused and looked, then forward turned once more  
And forward strode into the foaming cloud,  
And as I went the flame grew bright and wide,  
And all was brilliant with that blazing light  
Which dazzled me and filled my eyes with red  
Till I was blinded and fell fainting down.  
Then cleared the clouds and there was no more mist.







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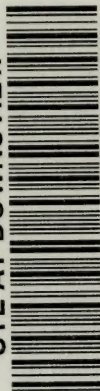
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